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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Ecuador:* draft resolution

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, 212 (III) of 19 November 1948, 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, by which it established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and all subsequent related resolutions, including its resolution 71/91 of 6 December 2016,

Recalling in particular its resolution 71/93 of 6 December 2016, in which it requested the Secretary-General to facilitate broad consultations to explore all potential ways and means, including through voluntary and assessed contributions, to ensure that the Agency's funding was sufficient, predictable and sustained for the duration of its mandate and also requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly and make recommendations for its consideration, without prejudice to the advice of relevant committees,

Taking note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East,[1] submitted pursuant to resolution 71/93 and containing the conclusions of the consultations conducted by the Steering Committee established by the Secretary-General and composed of Switzerland as Chair and Turkey as Vice-Chair, and considering the recommendations contained in the report,

Having considered the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015,[2]

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* On behalf of the States that are members of the Group of 77 and China, taking into account also the provisions of General Assembly resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998.

[1] A/71/849.

[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 13* (A/71/13).

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Having considered also the update to the special report of 3 August 2015 of the Commissioner-General, as conveyed by the Secretary-General on 15 September 2016 to the President of the General Assembly, regarding the severe financial crisis of the Agency and the negative implications for the continued delivery of core Agency programmes to the Palestine refugees in all fields of operation,

Recalling the letter dated 19 September 2016 from the President of the General Assembly appealing for active and collective engagement in efforts to urgently address the Agency's fragile state, including through action in support of the recommendations contained in the update to the special report,

Noting the extraordinary meeting of the Advisory Commission of the Agency held on 8 September 2016, and reaffirming its appreciation for the efforts of the Commission in support of the Agency,

Taking note with appreciation of the reports of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its efforts to assist in ensuring the Agency's financial security,

Aware of the continuing needs of the Palestine refugees in all fields of operation, namely, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

Underlining that, at a time of heightened conflict and instability in the Middle East, the Agency continues to play a vital role in ameliorating the plight of the Palestine refugees through the provision of, inter alia, essential education, health, relief and social services programmes, and emergency assistance to a registered population of 5.3 million refugees, whose situation has become extremely precarious, and in providing a crucial measure of stability in the region, pending the just resolution of the question of the Palestine refugees,

Recognizing the relevance of the Agency's role, mandate and operations in support of human rights, peace and security, and development, and its unique capacity to perform hybrid humanitarian and development functions,

Recognizing also, as affirmed by the Secretary-General in his report, that the Agency's programmes promote 10 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, as defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[3] and are closely aligned with various commitments in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants,[4] and emphasizing that the Agency's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals in the region, in which some Goals are being set back by conflict and its consequences, should be actively supported,

Recalling the affirmation in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants that, inter alia, the Agency, along with other relevant organizations, requires sufficient funding to be able to carry out its activities effectively and in a predictable manner,

Reiterating its deep concern about the extremely critical financial situation of the Agency, caused by its structural underfunding, as well as by rising needs, inflation and expenditures resulting from the deterioration of socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions and conflicts and instability in the region, and their significant negative impact on the situation of the Palestine refugees and the Agency's ability to deliver essential services to the refugees in all fields of operation,

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[3] Resolution 70/1.

[4] Resolution 71/1.

Recognizing with appreciation the important support and cooperation provided by the host Governments to the Agency in the discharge of its duties for almost seven decades,

Recognizing with appreciation also the generous support of donors to the Agency and their efforts to respond to the Agency's financial crises, including in response to recent critical shortfalls,

Welcoming the joint efforts of host countries and donors to mobilize political and financial support to redress the Agency's critical funding shortfalls, including the high-level meetings co-chaired by Jordan and Sweden in September 2015 and May 2016 to strengthen support towards sustainably funding the Agency,

Stressing the need for more urgent efforts to comprehensively address the recurrent and growing funding shortfalls affecting Agency operations, including by examining new funding modalities aimed at achieving the vital goal of stabilizing the Agency's financial situation in order to enable the Agency to carry out its core programmes effectively, in accordance with its mandate and commensurate with humanitarian needs,

Noting the Agency's implementation of robust internal measures, as reflected in its medium-term strategy for 2016-2021, despite difficult operational circumstances, and recognizing also the need to sustain those efforts aimed at reforming the Agency, containing expenditures, reducing operational and administrative costs, maximizing the use of resources and reducing funding shortfalls, while also taking all measures possible to protect and improve the quality, access to and delivery of core programmes of assistance,

Noting also the Agency's efforts to develop innovative and diversified means to mobilize resources, including through expansion of its donor base and partnerships with international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society,

Aware that the Agency's programme budget is primarily funded by voluntary contributions from Member States and intergovernmental organizations, and noting that contributions have not been predictable or sufficient enough to meet growing refugee needs and remedy the persistent shortfalls that increasingly threaten the Agency's ability to deliver its core programmes of assistance,

Recalling its resolution 3331 B (XXIX) of 17 December 1974, which provided that expenses for salaries of international staff in the service of the Agency, which would otherwise be a charge on voluntary contributions, should be financed by the regular budget of the United Nations for the duration of the Agency's mandate,

Noting that, apart from international staff salaries, the core administrative and management costs of the Agency relating to, inter alia, executive direction, internal oversight and evaluation, risk management, inspection and compliance, refugee registration, internal administration of justice, essential safety and security, financial management, resource mobilization, donor and host coordination, legal administration, human resources, programme management and information systems architecture, are being funded entirely from voluntary contributions, despite being essential for operations,

Recalling its resolution 65/272 of 24 May 2011, in which it requested the Secretary-General to continue to support the institutional strengthening of the Agency through the provision of financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations,

Stressing the need to support the Agency's capacity to uphold its mandate and to avert the serious humanitarian, political and security risks that would result from any interruption or suspension of its vital work,

1. *Reaffirms* the necessity for the continuation of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in accordance with its mandate and that its effective functioning and unimpeded operation remain essential in all fields of operation, pending the just resolution of the question of the Palestine refugees;

2. *Commends* the Agency for its provision of vital assistance to the Palestine refugees and its role as a stabilizing factor in the region, and also commends the tireless efforts of the Commissioner-General and all staff of the Agency in implementing its mandate, including the exemplary capacity to mobilize in emergency situations while continuously carrying out the core human development programmes;

3. *Encourages* the Agency to continue to reduce the vulnerability and improve the self-reliance and resilience of the Palestine refugees through its programmes;

4. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General on the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East[1] and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein;

5. *Expresses its appreciation* for the commitment by the Secretary-General to, inter alia, work with Member States, including relevant committees, to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible with the resources vested in the United Nations, the Agency's financial requirements are supported;

6. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Steering Committee, comprising Switzerland as Chair and Turkey as Vice-Chair, for conducting consultations on behalf of the Secretary-General with members of all regional groups, the host countries, intergovernmental bodies and international financial institutions to consider the ways and means to ensure sufficient, predictable and sustained funding for the Agency for the duration of its mandate;

7. *Appeals* to States and organizations for the maintenance of their voluntary contributions to the Agency, as well as an increase in contributions where possible, in particular to the Agency's programme budget, including in consideration of their allocation of resources for international human rights, peace and stability, development and humanitarian efforts, to support the Agency's mandate and its ability to meet the rising needs of the Palestine refugees and essential associated costs of operations;

8. *Appeals* to States and organizations not currently contributing to the Agency to urgently consider making voluntary contributions in response to the calls of the Secretary-General for expansion of the Agency's donor base in order to stabilize funding and ensure greater sharing of the financial burden of supporting the Agency's operations, in accordance with the continuing responsibility of the international community as a whole to assist the Palestine refugees;

9. *Calls for* the provision by donors of early annual voluntary contributions, less earmarking, and multi-year funding, in line with the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing announced at the World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2016, in order to enhance the Agency's ability to plan and implement its operations with a greater degree of assurance regarding resource flows;

10. *Also calls for* the full and timely funding by donors of the Agency's emergency, recovery and reconstruction programmes as set out in its appeals and response plans;

11. *Requests* the Commissioner-General to continue efforts to maintain and increase traditional donor support and to enhance income from non-traditional donors, including through partnerships with public and private entities, aimed at mobilizing more sustainable, sufficient and predictable resources and through the possible appointment of a senior envoy for this purpose, within existing resources;

12. *Encourages* the Agency to explore financing avenues in relation to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

13. *Urges* States and organizations to actively pursue partnerships with and innovative support for the Agency, including as recommended in paragraphs 47, 48 and 50 of the report of the Secretary-General, including through the establishment of endowments, trust funds or revolving fund mechanisms, as well as assistance to the Agency to access humanitarian, development and peace and security trust funds and grants;

14. *Welcomes* pledges by States and organizations to provide diplomatic and technical support to the Agency, including in terms of engagement with international financial and development institutions, including the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, and, where appropriate, to facilitate support for the establishment of financing mechanisms that can provide assistance to refugees and in fragile contexts, including to meet the needs of the Palestine refugees, and calls for serious follow-up efforts;

15. *Requests* the Agency to continue to implement efficiency measures through its medium-term strategy and the development of a five-year proposal for stabilizing the Agency's finances, including specific and time-bound measures to continue to improve its cost efficiency and resource mobilization efforts, while recognizing the high level of efficiency at which the Agency is operating and the extensive measures already taken to reform the Agency, contain costs, reduce operational and administrative costs, reduce funding shortfalls, prioritize core services and maximize the use of resources;

16. *Requests* the Secretary-General to present a report on the above-mentioned measures as well as on the implementation of the present resolution to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, under the agenda item on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East;

17. *Calls upon* the members of the Advisory Commission and the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to respectively consider the relevant recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General, including regarding the provision of technical and financial assistance to help the Agency to address resource mobilization challenges and to actively assist the Commissioner-General in the efforts to create sustainable, sufficient and predictable support for the Agency's operations;

18. *Recommends*, in this special case, without setting a precedent regarding other organizations, funds and programmes, a gradual increase in the support to be provided to the Agency from the regular budget of the United Nations, within the existing overall regular budget outline, beginning with the regular budget for the biennium 2018-2019, as among the combination of means to stabilize the Agency's finances and more effectively and predictably support its operational capacity to implement its mandate;

19. *Recommends* that this increase in the United Nations regular budget allocation to the Agency should, in addition to covering international staff requirements, in accordance with resolution 3331 B (XXIX), be utilizable in the biennium 2018-2019 only up to 61.7 per cent of the Agency's executive and administrative costs;

20. *Requests* the Secretary-General, accordingly, to submit a revised budget, in the framework of the 2018-2019 United Nations programme budget, that includes, in a prioritized manner and in accordance with the stipulations of paragraphs 17 and 18 of the present resolution, proposals for increased funding for consideration by the relevant committees at the seventy-second session;

21. *Requests* the Commissioner-General to include, in the annual reporting to the General Assembly, assessments on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the present resolution.